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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BUREAU OF ENTOMOLOGY  
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BLISTER BEETLES

These insects are long, black, grey or striped beetles with narrow thorax, round heads, and relatively soft wing covers. The "old-fashioned" potato bug, commonly known to eastern gardeners, is an example of these beetles. They frequently travel in droves and are voracious feeders, doing much damage in short periods of time.

The best remedy which has been developed so far for the control of blister beetles is by dusting with a chemical known as sodium fluosilicate. The use of this chemical for the control of the striped blister beetle is discussed in the enclosed Department Leaflet No. 12. It is equally effective against other members of this group. While the sodium fluosilicate is an effective remedy against these pests, under some conditions it will cause plant injury. This injury, however, is not usually severe enough to cause noticeable damage to the crop. Where possible, the treatments should be made at the time of the day when the foliage of the plant is dry, since it appears that if sodium fluosilicate is used when there is considerable moisture on the plant, there is greater danger of plant injury than when the foliage is dry.

Sodium fluosilicate should not be applied to tomatoes or similar crops when they are in fruit, nor to plants with edible foliage because of the likelihood of contamination with the poisonous residue. It is quite frequently possible to check the movement of the beetles into the fields by dusting strips along the edges before they actually get on the crop. Careful observation and early action are required to check their spread.

TRUCK AND GARDEN CROP  
INSECT INVESTIGATIONS

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